

***Bombus lucorum* (L.) (Hym.: Apidae) active in Hertfordshire in mid-winter**

In the late morning of 26 December 2004 near Bricket Wood in Hertfordshire (VC 20), I was surprised to encounter a queen *Bombus lucorum* in flight. She did not remain active for long, entering a hole in a grassy bank while I watched, but had evidently generated sufficient heat to take flight. Although the wind was light and sunshine brilliant and unbroken, it was a cold morning: at a similar elevation (approximately 75 metres asl) two kilometres further west, the air temperature during the preceding night had fallen to  $-3.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  and was to rise to only  $+2.6^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the afternoon; several preceding days and nights had been rather milder.

George Else (2002, *Ent. Rec.* 114: 54) describes a number of winter observations of bumble bees, mostly this species or *B. terrestris*, but mentions that the records are mainly restricted to southern coastal counties. He also states that such records sometimes result from disturbance of the hibernation site, which cannot be ruled out in the present case.— C. M. EVERETT, The Lodge, Kytes Drive, Watford, Herts WD25 9NZ (E-mail: cm.everett@ntlworld.com).

***Abraxas grossulariata* (L.) (Lep.: Geometridae) feeding on leaves of *Sedum spectabile***

While visiting relations in Walsall, in the West Midlands, during May 2003, I noticed feeding damage to the leaves of a plant of *Sedum spectabile* in their garden. On closer inspection I was surprised to find that the damage was being caused by several larvae of the Magpie Moth, *Abraxas grossulariata*. As far as I am aware this plant is not mentioned as a larval pabulum in the British literature.

When I lived in the West Midlands in the 1960s we had magpie moth caterpillars on blackcurrant bushes in the garden every year, but I have never seen any on my unsprayed bushes in Kent during 20 years of observations.— MICHAEL EASTERBROOK, 26 Orchard Grove, Ditton, Kent.

**The American Painted Lady *Cynthia virginienensis* (Drury) (Lep.: Nymphalidae) at Totland, Isle of Wight, in 2004**

On a warm sunny day on 6 August 2004, I noticed a large, dark orange-brown butterfly flying in my garden and adjoining properties. I watched its soaring and gliding flight for several minutes and thought that it was possibly an American Painted Lady *Cynthia virginienensis*. It soon settled on my hedge, on an ivy leaf, when my suspicions were confirmed. This is the second time that I have been acquainted with this butterfly. On 19 August 1956 I captured one, a female, in my garden at Freshwater, Isle of Wight, which is now the most prized butterfly in my collection. Coincidentally, it was the wettest August since 1956 and both years experienced bouts of south-westerly winds.— SAM KNILL-JONES, 1 Moorside, Moons Hill, Totland, Isle of Wight PO39 OHU.